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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 7 January 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of Cuba (see annex), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, in the light of its decision to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019 at the elections to be held in New York in November 2016 during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

These voluntary pledges and commitments confirm the priority that Cuba attaches to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all within the United Nations framework and, in particular, its commitment to strengthening the work of the Human Rights Council.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of Cuba has the honour to request the Office of the President of the General Assembly to circulate the present note and its annex as a document of the General Assembly for consideration by Member States.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 January 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Cuba to the Human Rights Council, 2017-2019

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches the greatest importance to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights within the United Nations and, to that end, aspires to be re-elected as a member of the Human Rights Council.

2. Cuba participated actively and constructively in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council and in its institution-building process. The Cuban delegation — both in its national capacity and as Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — submitted various proposals designed to ensure that the Council would serve as a forum for genuine dialogue and international cooperation on human rights, and to prevent its work from becoming tainted by the harmful practices of confrontation and political manipulation that put paid to the very existence of the Commission on Human Rights.

3. Cuba remains committed to promoting consideration of the just historical demands of the peoples of the South and of the large majority worldwide on issues such as the effective realization of the right to development; combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and ensuring full respect for the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity and non-selectivity in strengthening cooperation on human rights matters. Cuba will continue to increase the attention paid to these just demands of individuals and peoples in its capacity as the main sponsor of some 10 draft resolutions in the Human Rights Council.

4. Cuba reaffirms its readiness to continue working tirelessly to achieve the shared goal of enabling all individuals and peoples throughout the world to enjoy all human rights, on the basis of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the internationally agreed human rights instruments and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Cuba reiterates its commitment to international cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

5. In February 2008, Cuba signed the International Covenants on Human Rights.

6. In May 2006, Cuba was elected as a founding member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2006-2009. In 2009, it was re-elected for the period 2009-2012.

7. From June 2011 to June 2012, Cuba served as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Human Rights Council, representing the Latin American and Caribbean region.

8. In November 2013 Cuba was re-elected for the period 2014-2016, which constitutes a resounding acknowledgement of the work done by Cuba in this area.

9. In May 2013, Cuba successfully defended its second report to the universal periodic review mechanism and has been working on implementing the recommendations that it accepted. Cuba reaffirms its commitment to continue

strengthening this mechanism and will work to consolidate the cooperation approach that inspired its establishment. At the same time, Cuba remains committed to addressing and implementing the recommendations which it accepted under that process and will work tirelessly to that end.

10. Cuban women and men have made significant progress in the enjoyment of all their human rights. Whether in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, the field of civil and political rights, or in the realization of so-called third-generation or solidarity rights, the Cuban people can show the world their achievements, with profound modesty, but with full satisfaction and pride.

11. If we had to mention only one — the most important attribute and right that the Cuban people have achieved — we would have to refer, without any doubt, to the full exercise of their right to self-determination, facing the grave obstacles and threats resulting from the unilateral policy of hostility, acts of aggression and the embargo imposed upon them.

12. Cuba's important achievements in such areas as health, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports are known internationally. However, what has been hidden or distorted is the fact that all this has been possible precisely because the Cuban people are the masters of their political fate and the country's resources, exercise the fullest power and control over the country's life, and participate actively in the effective system of democracy that they designed and approved in a universal plebiscite.

13. Many of the peoples of the world know very well the nobility of ideals that sustains the conduct of the Cuban people in their international activities. Several of them directly benefited from the selfless and permanent commitment of Cubans to the advancement of human rights for all, throughout the world. Tens of thousands of Cubans shared the fate of the millions of brothers and sisters in the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. Millions of people have regained their health with Cuban cooperation: 325,710 Cubans have worked in 158 countries and today 58,281 Cuban health-care workers serve in 68 nations. Thanks to the "Yes I can" literacy programme, 9,376,000 people have become literate in 30 States; and more than 68,000 foreign students from 157 countries have graduated in Cuba.

14. Cuba has a long record of international cooperation in the area of human rights, demonstrating through concrete actions its unequivocal willingness to engage in frank and open dialogue. Cuba is a State party to 15 of the main international human rights instruments and a signatory to another two.

15. Cuba has consolidated its dialogue with the human rights treaty bodies. Since 2011, Cuba has defended its periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Cuba recently appeared before the Committee on the Rights of the Child to defend its initial reports under the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also submitted, and is preparing to defend, its initial reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. Cuba is currently drafting other periodic reports, pursuant to the obligations arising from the ratification of these important international human rights instruments. Cuba will continue working to comply with the international obligations undertaken in the field of human rights.

16. Cuba was one of the first countries to be visited by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights barely one year after this post was established. It also hosted visiting missions of several thematic procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, and, in October 2007, it received the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. Cuba systematically provides all the information necessary to respond to requests by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Cuba will continue to cooperate with all universal procedures established by the Council.

17. The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited Cuba in November 2015 and met with senior officials of the Cuban Government. Similarly, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, has been invited to visit the country on a mutually convenient date.

18. With this candidature to the Human Rights Council, Cuba seeks to continue to contribute in a decisive manner to consolidating an approach based on cooperation and constructive dialogue in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery, and to prevent its work from being tainted by the political manipulation that discredited and put paid to the Commission on Human Rights.

19. If elected to the Human Rights Council, Cuba will continue to promote within the Council its traditional initiatives on such vital issues as the right to food, the promotion of cultural rights and respect for cultural diversity as well as the promotion of peace as an essential requirement for the enjoyment of all human rights. Cuba will also continue to work on the progressive development of third-generation rights, in particular of international solidarity.